

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 /052 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6924

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 7579

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL CRISIS

REF: CANBERRA 7568

1. SUMMARY: AT 5 PM NOVEMBER 11, THE GOVERNOR GENERAL DISSOLVED BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND CALLED FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS. IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON DECEMBER 13. END SUMMARY.

2. THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S DECISION BROUGHT TO A HEAD AUSTRALIA'S MOST DIFFICULT POLITICAL CRISIS SINCE FEDERATION. WHITLAM CLAIMED THAT THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S DECISION WAS UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND THAT HE HAD NO PRIOR NOTICE OF IT. HE CLAIMED QTE THE QUEEN WOULD NEVER HAVE DONE THIS. END QTE ADDING, QTE I LIKE A FIGHT AND I EXPECT TO WIN THIS ONE. END QTE.

3. THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S DECISION TO DISMISS WHITLAM CAUGHT ALL AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE CANBERRA PRESS GALLERY BY
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COMPLETE SURPRISE. THE IMMEDIATE BENEFICIARY IS CLEARLY NOW

CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER FRASER WHO WAS REELING UNDER WHITLAM'S ATTACKS LAST WEEK. OVER THE LONGER RUN, THE OUTCOME IS LESS CERTAIN. THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S STATEMENT, WHICH INDICATES THAT THE SENATE HAS THE CLEAR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO REJECT SUPPLY BILLS, IS AN HISTORIC FIRST IN AUSTRALIA. THE ALP AND ITS TRADE UNION SUPPORTERS ARE INCENSED AND CLAIM THAT THEY WERE ROBBED BY QTE THE ESTABLISHMENT END QTE ACTU PRESIDENT HAWKE MADE AN IMPASSIONED RADIO PLEA ASKING TRADE UNION MEMBERS TO REMAIN CALM AND INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT INCLINED TO DISPUTE THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL. WHITLAM, ON THE OTHER HAND, DURING AN INFLAMMATORY PRESS CONFERENCE, SAID THAT MANY AUSTRALIANS WILL QTE GIVE AWAY ON THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IF I AM NOT RE-ELECTED. THEY WOULD CONSIDER PARLIAMENT NOT TO BE A VEHICLE FOR REFORM. END QTE.

4. COMMENT: MOST ALP PARLIAMENTARIANS AGREE THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE ALP TO WIN THE ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THEY BELIEVE THAT THE ALP IS UNITED AND WILL FIGHT QTE BOOTS AND ALL TO WIN. END QTE WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS, WHICH WILL PROBABLY TAKE PLACE ON DECEMBER 13, WHITLAM HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE INTENDS TO FIGHT THIS ELECTION ON ONE ISSUE - THE RIGHT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO GOVERN AUSTRALIA. HIS PREFERENCE IS CLEAR, A CENTRALIZED UNICAMERAL REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT RECOURSE TO THE CROWN. FRASER WILL FIGHT THE ELECTION ON CURRENT ISSUES; INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE LACK OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. MOREOVER, HE BELIEVES IN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM AND IS DEEPLY ATTACHED TO AUSTRALIA'S TRADITIONAL TIES TO THE CROWN. WHILE THE OUTCOME IS UNCERTAIN, MOST OBSERVERS FEEL THAT THE LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY COALITION WILL WIN; BUT NOT BY THE LANDSLIDE PREDICTED PRIOR TO ITS DECISION TO DEFER THE BUDGET IN THE SENATE. PERCIVAL

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